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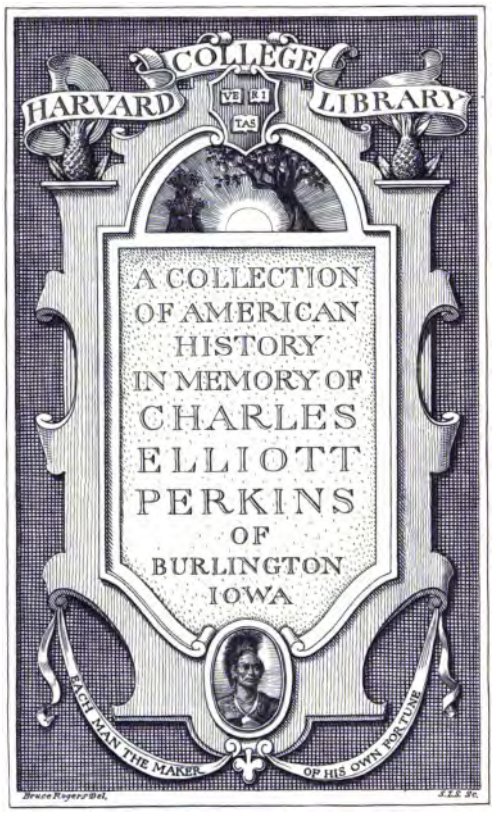
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MEMORIAL DAY.

MAY 30, 1870.

ORATION

BY

GEN. I. F. SHEPARD,

(ADJUTANT GENERAL OF MISSOURI,)

AT

JEFFERSON BARRACKS,

ST. LOUIS, MO.

St. Louis:
MISSOURI DEMOCRAT BOOK AND JOB PRINTING HOUSE.
1870.

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MEMORIAL COLLECTION

ORATION

BY

GEN. I. F. SHEPARD,

(Adjutant General of Mo., and Grand Commander G. A. R. of the State,)

ON THE OCCASION OF

DECORATING THE SOLDIERS' GRAVES,

AT THE

NATIONAL CEMETERY,

JEFFERSON BARRACKS, NEAR ST. LOUIS, MO.,

MAY 30, 1870.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, FELLOW-CITIZENS AND SURVIVING COMRADES: Another year has brought us to these consecrated grounds, again to pay our tributes of love and reverence to departed heroes who sleep peacefully about us beneath these mounds and monuments. The sighing breezes of this beautiful spring-time, and the rich-voiced utterance of tender harmonies, swelling in varied symphony through the lofty foliage of these native forests, have a requiem cadence more appropriate and humanizing than muffled drums and wailing trumpets, when pomp and circumstance wait upon the biers of those who go to dusty death from places of power and from the ranks of mere worldly grandeur.

These our fallen brothers mainly descended from no lofty lineage, walked in no paths of external greatness, and therefore claimed no glaring sepulture. Yet the glory of their lives, and far more to be noted, the triumph of their deaths, has ranked them among the immortal few whose names were not born to die. The halo of their

nobility is as the rising sun, which sends its flashes afar up the horizon, kindling and glowing over the ether concave, till a world is bathed in light and beauty.

These men died for duty. They fell in a conflict for principles. They went forth energized by the burning zeal of patriotism. The pure delights of home they sacrificed. The fond endearments of loved ones were set aside. The holy ties of paternity were severed. The sacred promptings of fraternal claims were given a subordinate place. The tender generosities of conjugal love were overborne and immolated. All forceful pleadings of ease and selfish gratification gave no eloquence that could seduce them from the devotion they owed to mankind. They heard the sharp fife-notes that pierced the ear like needles of sound, and they answered when reverberating drum-beats made the air heavy with notes of alarm from a country in danger. Thus these true children of liberty proved themselves worthy of the baptism in which the fathers had consecrated the infant nation.

They went forth from hamlet and city; from the field and the forest; from the marts of commerce and from the haunts of toiling industry. They took their willing share in the severities of an unaccustomed discipline; in the toilsome fatigue of lengthening marches; in the dreary tediousness of duties in life-destroying camps; in the wearying watchfulness of midnight sentinels whom storm and tempest made more keenly alert; they endured the winter's smiting cold, and summer's blasting heats; they kept watch and ward where malaria walked in darkness and destruction wasted at noonday. Many of them fell where disease, more terrible than the fierce onset of battle, sapped hope, and energy, and life; when miasma, deadly as the sirocco of the desert, struck strong men down to writhe in untold agonies. These sufferings were the more unmitigated and terrible because they denied their victims the sad privilege to die in war's grim armor, and snatched the coveted boon of pouring the heart's best life-blood in courageous contest, against foes whom unreason had maddened to desperate bravery, only surpassed by that better cause opposed to them. Still others of them went down beneath the shock of serried ranks, amid the carnage of war, when the brazen gates were opened, and fiery Mars assumed the terrific reign that ancient sages attribute to

him. The long waves of sulphurous fire, the deafening roar of battle-storm, and the reiterated thunder of battery and columbiad, made the awful announcement of havoc in human limbs and human life, while souls went winging to the spirit-land through the murky darkness of battle smoke. Satisfied and triumphant these more fortunate ones died, while the dear old flag they had rallied to defend floated, tattered and riven, above them. Their last fond look was upon its waving stripes, and the closing eyes rested upon the field of blue set with golden stars, that prefigured their own exaltation in the constellation of heroes.

These all gave themselves a willing sacrifice, and laid down their lives in the defense of immutable principles, of equal rights, of universal freedom.

> "Many loved Truth—
> But these our brothers fought for her,
> At life's dear peril wrought for her,
> So loved her that they died for her."

It is fitting, then, that we make our annual pilgrimage to their graves to recall the teachings of the grand drama, to rehearse their deeds and their virtues, and to embalm their memories with all the tender rites of affection and of honor. Some one has written that when good men die tears gush forth, which their beneficent deeds kept from flowing while they lived. The tribute of tears is thus due these lost ones; for their sacrifice was an essential necessity for our peace and security, individual and national. These mournful honors serve to renew, in glowing remembrance, the grand ideas that actuated them, and the unspeakable good their sacrifice served to make sure for all peoples, of all lands, in all the ages yet to come.

The centuries of the world's history are illuminated volumes of records of the progressive movements of mankind toward individual liberty. That which the late civil war emblazoned is the grandest in its results, the most far-reaching, and the sublimest of them all. The struggle for national integrity and life—inaugurated only to maintain the national Constitution, and to preserve the national faith and compacts inviolate—providentially, and by no human foresight, propounded new and unlooked-for problems for adjustment, and forced new postulates, wonderfully in advance of previous

conclusions. The corner stone of the Republic had indeed been based upon the declaration of the fathers of '76, which proclaimed first among nations the paramount truth that "all men are created free and equal." But so far was the practice from demonstrating the reality of this truth, that one gifted orator characterized the instrument as composed of "glittering generalities;" and still another, with more fervid feeling, denounced it as "a cheat and a lie." From their own individual standpoints, and from their individual inspirations, kindled by the friction of contradictory facts, which proved the divergence between the written letter and the petrifactions of political deeds; both were right, and the sarcasm and taunt were equally deserved by the nation. Yet both were thoroughly wrong. Nations as well as individuals, in their accomplished deeds, often fall fearfully short of their professions in the actualities of practice, and the woeful fact is in every one's consciousness that the ideal of character is seldom justified by the real. Mankind continually violate their own standards of duty, and it is true of men as well as things, that they "are not what they seem." We see in all quarters presumed goodness mortifyingly betrayed by acts of crime, and sudden development of long-concealed guilt. We see saints in the closet transformed to be little in advance of demons when occupying the seats of the money-changers. We see devotees of science, men renowned in official experience and State craft, all at once display some practical folly that explodes the powerful fascinations of a great name. As a star of magnitude may be riven by opposite chemical powers and fly into fragments, leaving a void of darkness, black and gloomy, so these errant and ruined statesmen fly from their orbits, and are ever after only fallen meteors. They can become planets of magnitude nevermore.

Yet men are not necessarily hypocrites because of inconsistent defection. They only illustrate the tendency of all things, mind and morals as well as matter, to fly the central point and plunge into unregulated space. A soul in ruins proves the soundness of the principles it has violated, just as the wreck and crush of a fallen building proves the law of gravitation. Because liberty was forgotten in the national practice in the mad whirl of politics; because four millions of slaves were held in cruel bondage, and the very

tissue of legislation, and the very marrow of political power consisted in the facts and necessities of the system, it did not show that the underlying professions were either false or simulated. But these facts did demonstrate that the nation had departed from its own formulas of justice, and for the time had annihilated the safe countervailing of centripetal and centrifugal forces in the moral system of the government. The harmony of the constituent parts was necessarily disturbed, and violence became a necessity. Wherever this is true no compromise with the wrong can ever become a precipitant of the disturbed conditions, and no cure for the chronic evils can be secured except by a return to the principles violated.

Hence the emancipation act was the necessary supplement to give integrity and consistency to the Declaration and to the Constitution. Yet such a result was neither planned for nor anticipated at the outbreak of the rebellion. The omnipotence of providential events forced it, by a new revelation, written upon the bosom of the earth in the blood of our fallen comrades. It was heralded in the thunders of battle-fields, the glare of whose lightnings reflected its truths for all nations to read. The premonitions of its announcement were only second in sublimity to that upon Sinai's awful front, when the Decalogue was given in fire and smoke, and the tumult of mountain thunder.

Then the charters of our liberty became consistent with the national practice, and the nation became beautiful in the integrity of justice, and its strength invincible as Michael, angel of power. The defense of its own free institutions necessitated the defense of all who suffered wrong, and by a sublime paradox rebellion became the mother of right to all the oppressed in the land. Well may we be proud of the name of America when our nationality is glorified by such achievements.

But we greet not alone to-day, in these solemn offerings, Americans by birth. Among the crowding hosts who listen to me are multitudes of foreign nationalities, and the gentleman who will follow me will speak fitting words to his German fellow-citizens, whose devotion to the country of their adoption, in the early days of gloom and peril in our city and State, no words can rightly measure, no panegyric out-merit. Every wild glade of bloody ambuscade; every battle-field of the long contest; every bivouac

of watchful outposts, every consecrated place of sepulture, bears witness to the true and brilliant service they gave as freely as if their enthusiasm had been kindled beyond the blue ocean, where the legends of the fatherland, and the love of liberty inherent in the Teutonic birth, made them freemen by nature. Neither the defense of their own cities and principalities, nor the exhilaration of legends of long lines of ancestors in poetic Rhineland, could have inspired deeds more heroic, more noble, more universal. When they became Americans by adoption, they became as nursing children at the breast of the mother, and died in filial love and duty.

So, too, of the sons of the Green Isle of the Northern ocean, who brought the impulsive generosities of their nativity to characterize their devotion to the land that had given them a welcome from the oppression of a hierarchy for which they had no sympathy. The impulsive sons of Erin forgot the claims of their beloved old Ireland, even, for a time, while they sprang with sturdy aid to right the ship of State that had wafted them to homes of plenty and peace. They gave significant devotion to the flag of the free that floated from the mast-head, remembering that under its folds alone they had found protection and prosperity.

Other European nationalities were not less devoted in their service, if of less multitude. The compatriots of Mazzini and Garibaldi, burning with zealous love of Italian glories; Republicans of France remembering the wrongs of Napoleonic fraud; even the descendants of liberty's own apostle, William Tell, born in the free air of Alpine heights, repeating again the deeds of unchained Switzerland, gave united impulse and united invincibility to the Union armies, wherever victory added a new cause of thanksgiving, that

> "One great clime
> Still reared her head, unconquered and sublime,
> Above the far Atlantic,".

and freely offered a refuge and a rest to all the oppressed peoples of the outspreading world.

It is not too much to say that, unaided by these adopted sons of the Republic, the contest might have been of doubtful result, or of still more desolating duration. Surely, if they had given their influence, their sympathy, and their personal daring in open hostility

to the Government, we should not to-day be crowning the graves of the conquerors with these floral garlands. We should not be mingling our tender memories with prideful joy over the grand finality, looking forward with unbounded anticipations to the coming grandeur of our beloved country. Instead of this, wailing and woe might have been heard throughout the land, while every household sat in sackcloth, mourning in agony that could not be stilled, that the glory and the beauty of the land had been lost in bootless battle, while the ruins of a fallen and shattered country would intone every breeze with a wild desolation. But they were Americans all, of whatever nationality or birth-land, cemented together in one high rivalry of patriotic fealty, children of one common country, with one common destiny before them of progression in purity, truth and freedom.

And yet, at the outbreak of the war, there had just passed away one of those passionate and fitful gusts of political folly which illustrates most forcibly the demented prejudices to which even wise men may become subjected. Secret societies had ruled over the land with grip and sign and solemn oath, whose scope and aim was to fetter the privileges of foreign-born citizens, to circumscribe the ballot, to create prejudicial distinctions, and to interdict office to aliens by birth, however wise, capable, manly and patriotic. More thorough political insanity never before ruled a people of intelligence, and was never since equaled save by similar machinery in the ill-fated borders of secession, in desperate need of appliances to propagate heresies and perpetuate the domination of guilt. One can but smile at this day at the irony of historical truth, when the name of "Know Nothing" seems so truly applied to a league for such professed and chimerical purposes. Could these have succeeded, how changed the aspect of this hour would have been! No crowding thousands from Central Europe; no Celtic braves from the North, and no mercurial sons of chivalry from the South, where the Tiber still flows as when it gave Romulus a resting place, would have flocked to the Union standards, gladdening the hearts of the people with electric thrill, and assuring victory in advance of the onset. Missouri would then have had another history than that she proudly glories in, as a State saved to the Union by bayonets held with firm grip in Teutonic hands, while her own sons were

paralyzed by the baneful sorceries and incantations of wizard leaders, who evoked from the popular delusions spirits they could not control. There would have been no such career of knightly glory for our martyred Lyon, in whose heart of truth all princely virtues dwelt, and who shall live in our loving reverence through all the coming days. Yonder city, Queen of the West, that bathes her feet in the Father of Waters, and trails her garments over the emerald hills of beauty for lengthened miles around, would have been a desolation of ruins—like Babylon of old, a crumbling heap of glory passed away. There could have been no brilliant deeds recorded of Sigel, of Osterhaus, and a thousand worthy compeers, and the eloquence of Schurz would have been hushed in untoward silence, or inflamed with philippics against a government too bigoted to be worthy of perpetuity.

But happily the war has finally settled such schemes of fatuity, and made their recurrence forever impossible. All nationalities have been bathed together in the blood of freedom's baptism, and side by side have received the chrism in the heart with mutual appreciation. If no other lesson had come from the conflict, this alone would equal its cost by its value to coming generations. It has fused in one brotherhood the dominant races of the world, and the sharp asperities of each shall become flexible and ductible by the common attrition. Mingled blood shall create a race whose mental and moral strength and excellence shall equal the physical regeneration, and society shall renew its vigor till the people of this proud and happy land shall re-create the earth. We are Americans all, when once the star-spangled banner waves over us—equal in rights, in pride of country, in deathless devotion to the land we love, and in the intensity of our aspirations for the elevation of the human race.

Glorious privilege of American citizenship! The memories of this hour teach us how to estimate it, and thus from these graves there comes to us a voice of wisdom and of strength!

But scattered among this throng I see individuals of still another nationality, differing from any I have noted. The dusky skin and stalwart physique of the race denote its origin from torrid lands; but if of differing species, the individual is still a man. The opening war found four millions of these unfortunate victims of

wrong, chained in mental, moral and social shackles, with intellect, energy, hope and soul crushed out of them. The Constitution and the Declaration existed, and yet this bondage was sanctioned by authority of law. I do not say by authority of the Constitution, for I do not believe one clause or one word in that instrument, rightly interpreted, was ever intended to sanction slavery. I do not believe the fathers imagined the system could be long perpetuated. It is certain they did not desire it. It was for degenerate sons to become alienated from the charter of liberty, reading its purposes with blinded or averted eyes. It was for after times to show how the greed for gold and the lust for power could together combine to rivet chains of infamy, and pervert all the appliances of power and all the sanctions of domestic life to build up an infamous caste, crushing manhood out of a race. It was for the nineteenth century, after generations had done homage to the ideas which Bunker Hill, and Saratoga, and Yorktown had electrotyped from the molten mass of philosophy, and the white-heated metal of thought, fused by the despotism of ancient king-craft, to see all the teachings of history blotted out from men's minds. It was reserved to our own days to behold even the pulpits of Christianity itself desecrated by impious teachers, who

> ——"stole the livery of Heaven
> To serve the devil in,"

and gave the authority of priestly vestments and the assumptions of divine commission to prove that the volume of sacred truth made American slavery not only justifiable but a religious duty. The scourge of scorpion-lashes in the hands of brutal passion thus became angelic ministrations; and stocks, and chains, and bludgeons, weapons of deadly cruelty, thus were transformed into agencies of holy ends.

Oh! strange and horrible outsprings of learning and of logic, when human interest and selfish ambition give them their only impulse and utterance! No wonder that in such times, burning with indignant protest against such exhibitions protected by the star-spangled banner, one cried in lyric agony,

> "Tear down that flaunting lie!"

But the onmoving of the war crushed out all these monstrosities of opinion, of purpose, and of act. The steady necessities impelled by the daily challenge of truth and the rapid culmination of events, soon advanced the race to be no longer reckoned merely slaves, but "contrabands of war." This was the entering wedge to break off the mountain of prejudice from its base. Steadily moved forward the public conscience, and tacit permission was given them to become fugitives, with no fear of arrest and return to incensed masters. Still impelled by new necessities, enlightened to practice the law of self-preservation, and melted by the heart-tones of pleading eloquence, the crucible of thought was at length at white-heat, the adamantine bonds gave way, and the President issued the Emancipation Proclamation, and a nation of freemen was born in a day. The ensuing transformation of these ransomed menials into the attitudes of manhood was natural and necessary. Aptly they learned the art of war, and as accredited soldiers in the grand army of liberty they made no shameful record where even the boldest veteran might well have quailed. Their well-won glories gave them the right to lay their dead with ours, and to be crowned with blossoms. It gave them more. It set the seal of free manhood upon them for all time, and gave them the right to coequal privilege, as their peril had achieved coequal honor.

Thus far the war had wrought. Then enlightened statesmanship, and the warm generosities of a redeemed nation, took up the ark of the covenant, carrying it forward, till at length it rests in a sure place, and the immutable fact goes forth that wherever men dwell under the ægis of our Constitution, and conform to the requirements of manhood and morality, of whatsoever nationality or color, or condition heretofore, they are henceforth enfranchised, free and noble, under the protection of the honor and the power of the grandest, proudest, justest nation in the wide circuit of Empires.

"Shake off the dust, O rising race,
Crowned as a brother and a man,
Justice to-day asserts her claim,
And from thy brow fades out the ban.

"With freedom's chrism upon thy head,
Her precious ensign in thy hand,
Go place thy once despised name
Amid the noblest of the land.

"Oh! ransomed race! give God the praise,
Who led thee through a crimson sea,
And 'mid the storm of fire and blood
Turned out the war-cloud's light to thee!"

Time would fail to note other harvests of political and social good to be gathered from seed sown broadcast over the land by the armies of liberty, watered by the blood of our brothers, and already filling our garners with a thousand-fold of increase. We must not even tarry to hear the songs of the early reapers as they go forth, jubilant, to gather sheaves heavy with ripened grain. The ages to come will alone suffice for that. But even now we see States restored, with all old heresies destroyed; we see the conquered and the conquerors forgetting ancient animosities, and harmonizing in permanent concord, because each is willing to be generous and just. We see stable peace engendering unwonted prosperities in all directions of industry, because men have illimitable faith in the government. The terrible scars left by civil slaughter are healing over, health has come to the diseased nation, and beauty irradiates her form and features. The wails of lamentation die away in the distance. The robes of sorrow give place to habiliments of joy. Grief for lost ones is exchanged for proud exultation, as survivors gaze upon tombstone and monumental shaft telling of glorious service and glorious death. These shall stand instead of the emblazonments of heraldry to countless generations of descendants, whose democratic nobility will date back to ancestors who fell in freedom's conflict, and are buried in consecrated spots where the national care keeps ward above them. Thus the immeasurable cost of the struggle was no more than equaled by the beneficent results; and it only remains for me to sum the fundamental truths underlying them.

When nineteen centuries ago the long-waited-for advent of Messiah was accomplished, and the sum of thousands of years of prophecy and hope was fulfilled in Bethlehem, the listening earth heard unwonted anthems rise and swell in choral harmonies along the echoing heavens. Judea's listening hills reverberated the wonderful cadences of joy. Angelic warders gathered and gave human utterance to celestial promptings. The symphony burst forth in dulcet richness and immortal strains—

"Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men."

Analyze this triune choral of celestial gratulation and you shall find in it the essence of all religion, the sum of all philosophy, the germ of all political and social wisdom—

Universal Reverence—Universal Liberty—Universal Charity.

And these are the outgrowing truths and results which our fallen brethren strove with us to accomplish. These are the sure fruits of their sacrifice. These are the lessons their graves teach us, all eloquent in their silence.

It needs but slight imagination to see these solitudes peopled to-day by their immortal essence, and to hear the hovering of seraphic wings. The spirits of heroes come to us from every hospital, from every camp-ground, from every battle-field where released souls left the mangled limbs and pain-crushed bodies to our keeping, and joined the ranks of immortals. As clouds gather in fleecy beauty, so these come to us from the four winds of heaven. They bend over us in loving gratitude as we come with flowers brilliant and beautiful, and redolent with perfumes as our own souls are of love and thankfulness that these men lived, and gave their lives for the benediction of the advancing ages.

Spread, then, these blossoms upon their tombs with generous hands. They are emblems of immortality. Each new spring-time sees them renew the miracle of their birth out of the death-beds of recurring winter, and as often shall our dear love shed blossoms of new thankfulness, in new remembrance of their virtues, and in new emulation of their worthful deeds. The Nation's heart shall flow with annual pulsations of maternal feeling, and crown their graves with nature's wreaths, beautifully typical of their own unending life.

Spirits of the noble dead! Ethereal host of undying heroes! Bend above us in fraternal greetings, and accept our tokens of love! Help us to bear our part in all duties, till, once again united, we stand in serried ranks of most glorious victory, where flowers spring eternal beside the still waters of life in the better land!

MEMORIAL DAY.

BY JUDGE R. E. ROMBAUER.

When freedom once from East to West
Sent forth her battle-cry,
Nine hundred thousand warriors rose,
To conquer or to die.

Nine hundred thousand warriors armed,
And marched to martial strains;
But ah! full many thousand went
That never came again.

On Southern plains—on Southern hills—
In brake and mountain dell,
They fought that freedom still might live—
That she might live, they fell.

And when her bright day dawned again—
Dawned after years of dread—
A thankful nation mournful went
To seek its hero dead!

It sought for them, in places all
Swept by the battle tide;
It built for them a garden home,
And laid them side by side.

* * * * * * * *

And years of war brought years of peace;
Then came another day,
When, after winter storms and frowns,
The roses blushed in May.

And, lo! men, women, children come
From places near and far—
An army grand, yet unadorned
By panoplies of war.

They come adorned with flowery wreaths,
Through the quiet shades to roam,
Where their brave brothers sleeping lie,
In their still garden home.

To deck their couch with fragrant leaves,
  To pray with fervent mien.
Their fame might be forever bright,
  Their memory ever green.

* * * * * * * *

Oh! brothers all! and sisters all,
  Of every race and age;
Who from all places near and far
  Join in this pilgrimage;

Whose steps by powers of love are led
  And guided all above,
Let us forget the days of hate
  On this great day of love.

Let us forget the slaying hand,
  Forgive the erring will;
Thanks to our fallen brothers brave,
  We are one nation still.

* * * * * * * *

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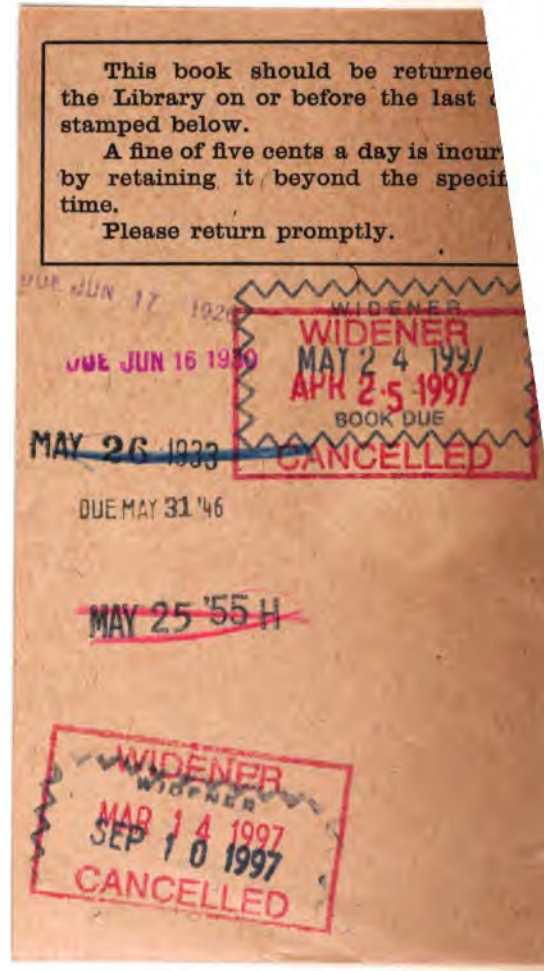
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